

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 1123
By Cooper

A RESOLUTION to recognize Michael L. Countess, Deputy
Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture,
on the occasion of his retirement.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those citizens who in their years of work have performed with uncommon devotion and enthusiasm; and

WHEREAS, Michael L. Countess is one such estimable person who has served the State of Tennessee with distinction for more than thirty years; and

WHEREAS, Mike Countess will be taking a much deserved retirement from Tennessee State government this spring; and

WHEREAS, a native of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Mr. Countess received his B.S. and M.S. degrees in Forest Resource Management from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, while focusing his studies on hardwood silviculture, statistics, and resource policy management, he was involved in numerous activities and organizations, including Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society, Gamma Sigma Delta National Agricultural Honor Society, Alpha Zeta National Agricultural Honor Fraternity, and Xi Sigma Pi National Forestry Honor Society; and

WHEREAS, after graduation, Mr. Countess began his professional career as Supervisor of the Division of Parks with the City of Oak Ridge; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, he began an illustrious tenure with the Tennessee Department of Conservation, serving in such positions as Program Administrator for Scenic Rivers, Forest Resource Planner, Chief of Natural Resources, and Director of Policy Planning over the years; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his responsibilities with the Department of Conservation, Mr. Countess worked as an instructor in Forest Management at Volunteer State Community College; and

WHEREAS, in 1988, Mike Countess was appointed Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Conservation; in this role, he oversaw general operations, strategic planning, policy analysis, and served as legislative liaison for the department; and

WHEREAS, after a reorganization of state government, Mike Countess was appointed Assistant Commissioner with the Department of Agriculture; as Assistant Commissioner, he oversaw the management of the Division of Forestry and the Division of Agricultural Resources and served as legislative liaison; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Countess also was instrumental in the coordination and implementation of the State Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Management Program; and

WHEREAS, in 2002, Mike Countess was appointed Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, a prestigious honor that serves as a testament to his work ethic, knowledge, and ability and commitment to getting the job done; and

WHEREAS, wholly dedicated to the noble precepts of public service, Mr. Countess continued to educate students as an adjunct faculty member for the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture; and

WHEREAS, it is this dedication and commitment that have earned Mr. Countess numerous awards from the Society of American Foresters, Forest Resource Systems Institute, Tennessee Department of Conservation, and Tennessee State Government; and

WHEREAS, he received the 1996 State Water Conservationist of the Year Award from the Tennessee Conservation League for his work in developing a cooperative relationship between water quality regulatory agencies and technical assistance programs within the Department of Agriculture; and

WHEREAS, Mike Countess has authored numerous papers and publications on forest and water management, strategic planning, and policy analysis; and

WHEREAS, throughout his distinguished career, he has been graced with the love and companionship of his wife, Becky, and their two children; the Countesses currently reside in Hendersonville; and

WHEREAS, Mike Countess has served the State of Tennessee with acumen and alacrity for more than thirty years; his devotion and dedication to the State's agricultural and forestry policy, its agricultural economy, and its environment have created a legacy of excellence, and his expertise will be sorely missed within the Department of Agriculture and Tennessee State government as a whole; and

WHEREAS, Mike Countess exemplifies the spirit and allegiance to family and community that are characteristic of a true Tennessean; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career, Mr. Countess has demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of colleagues and superiors alike; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we thank Michael L. Countess for his many years of meritorious service to the State of Tennessee and salute his unswerving commitment to excellence.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we extend to Mike Countess our heartfelt wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement and every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.